FREE

Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk May 21, 2017

East edition No 765

ELECTION

Counting cost of poll defeat

We examine candidates' fight to save their deposit

TRAVEL

Rail services under spotlight

Will direct link to Gatwick be back on track?

AGRICULTURE

Fears over the apple harvest

Farmers keeping fingers crossed crop survived the frost

EVENTS

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Water all around so why can't we make it yet?

AMID all our technological advances it seems slightly odd that at no point have the great minds of science worked out a straight forward way for us to mass produce water,

You would think its ability to save lives, to alleviate pressure on such an under-strain yet essential resource, would see huge campaigns and charities funding research to deliver what is surely something of a Holy Grail?

Quite aside from the potential it could bring to arid parts of the world and our fellow humans who face such gargantuan challenges in their daily pursuit of it for mere surival, it would also mean our ever expanding population could do so without our supplies of water being spread so perilously thin.

It's difficult, of course, to think there can be too much of a crisis after several days of rain, but you can be pretty certain that unless it rains daily between now and July, the chances are we could soon be staring a hosepipe ban in the face again come the peak summer.

All of which should remind us that however big and powerful we can make computers enabling us to make such giant strides forward, we are still acutely vulnerable to losing the most basic forms of ingredients we need for surival.

Technology arguably blinds us to the basics.

Inside today's edition we take a look at how our farmers are collectively keeping their fingers crossed that the weather over recent months does not cause them hardships if the combination of rain, sun and frost impacts too heavily on their crops.

So before you get too smug that technology protects and safeguards us, bear in mind that Mother Nature is still in charge at all times.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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Cops confirm 15 football abuse cases being probed

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

POLICE this week confirmed it is investigating six reports of historic sex abuse cases in Kent football.

It follows the high profile revelations by former footballers last year into claims they had been abused at clubs elsewhere in the country, prompting a flurry of reports nationwide.

A Kent Police spokesman said: "Operation Hydrant launched the co-ordination service for reports of non-recent football-related child sexual abuse in November 2016.

"Since then, Kent Police has received 28 reports of child abuse in football. Fifteen of these reports concerned non-recent offences committed in Kent, of which six remain the subject of on-going investigation by another force."

The Metropolitcan Police are co-ordinating the investigation.

Detective chief superintendent, Ivan Balhatchet, of its sexual offences, exploitation and child abuse command, said: "Whilst the vast majority of the allegations relate to sexual abuse, some of them are physical abuse. Allegations are connected with individuals at 77 named clubs or teams across the nation. The breakdown of those clubs is: Five in the Premier League, three against Championship clubs, three against clubs in Leagues One and Two, and 66 other named clubs which would include non-league or non-professional or amateur teams.

"We will not be giving a commentary as this investigation develops and are not discussing the names of the clubs involved, or number of allegations against each club."

CONCERN: Reports of football-related child sexual abuse first emerged in November last year

A statement from the Kent Football Association, said: "We are currently working with the independent review into child sex abuse allegations in football. Kent FA acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people and is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all members."

An NSPCC spokesperson said: "It's clear that for far too long, too many people who suffered abuse as youngsters in the game have not been able to speak up, but it is encouraging that so many are finally finding their voice in a climate today where they know they will be listened to and supported.

"What's important now is that those victims get that much-needed support, and that perpetrators are identified and brought to justice by police."

Hospitals avoid falling victim to cyber-attacks on NHS computers

ALL of Kent's hospitals and health organisations escaped the chaos caused by the cyber-attack on the NHS last weekend.

Patients were able to use services as normal after all of the trusts behind our hospitals and health centres avoided a so-called ransomware attack on the NHS.

The virus swept across the NHS last Friday, holding computers to ransom for $300 worth of online currency Bitcoin, threatening to delete files if the payment was not made.

Concerns were raised more NHS services could be affected on Monday, but Kent's hospital trusts confirmed they had not been targeted in the scam, thought to have accessed computers via email.

East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust, which runs five hospitals in the county including the William Harvey in Ashford, QEQM in Margate and the Kent and Canterbury hospitals, confirmed it had avoided an attack said: "East Kent hospitals were unaffected by the cyber attack. All services are operating as normal."

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust, which runs Darent Valley Hospital, added: "Our IT teams were in over the weekend making sure our systems were robust enough to protect against a possible infection, and our firewall was up to date to prevent such a problem."

Liz Capp-Gray, acting director of health informatics at the Medway Foundation Trust, which runs Gillingham's Medway Maritime said: "I can confirm that we have not, so far, been directly targeted by the WannaCry ransomware attack.

"Our pro-active routine maintenance and planned security and anti-virus update programme, coupled with the county-wide Internet Security Filter has protected us. Work is ongoing to ensure that this remains the case and we are continuing to monitor the situation closely."

Margate man charged over Thailand death crash horror

THE boyfriend of a pregnant woman crushed to death in a scooter accident in Thailand has been charged with causing death by reckless driving.

Sophie Anderson, 41, originally from Lancashire, died in the crash in Thalang, Phuket, on May 8, in which her partner, Danny Glass, 29, from Margate, was also injured.

The Phuket News reported that Mr Glass lost control of the scooter they were riding on after he braked suddenly to avoid ramming into the back of a car.

Ms Anderson fell onto the road and was run over by an 18-wheeled truck driven by Nattawoot Kimchue, 30, from Thai Muang in Phang Nga Province

Both the driver and Mr Glass have been charged.

Bird swoops to replace Dean as Lib Dems leader on KCC

THE Liberal Democrats have confirmed Trudy Dean is stepping down from her position as leader of the group on Kent County Council.

Cllr Dean, who retained her Malling Central seat earlier this month with an increased share of the vote, has been in the role for two decades but is now set to be replaced by Maidstone Central councillor Rob Bird.

"I have worked very hard to lead and support the Lib Dem group as a well informed and constructive group at KCC," Cllr Dean said.

"I laid plans for my deputy, Rob Bird to take my place two years ago and I am extremely pleased that those plans have come to fruition. I am absolutely confident that Rob has all the skills necessary to fulfil the role with great success."

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seven days

Stories which made the headlines @kentnews.co.uk during the past week

Anger as Southeastern introduce rail fare hike

CAMPAIGNERS have reacted angrily to train firm Southeastern announcing off peak fares are set to rise from this Sunday.

The unregulated fares - commuter fares at peak times are determined by the government - will rise by 3.4 per cent or 10p, whichever is greater.

But Lianna Etkind from the Campaign for Better Transport said: "Sneaking through fares hikes without an official announcement is an appallingly highhanded way to treat passengers.

"It's bad enough passengers have had to put up with years of peak fare rises while wages stagnate, but more back-door fare increases are unacceptable."

Southeastern said: "We keep fare increases to a minimum and have frozen some fares for the past three years."

Injunction filed against controversial millionaire landlord over race claims

By Tom Pugh
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LEGAL action has begun against millionaire propety tycoon Fergus Wilson, who banned Indian and Pakistani tenants from renting his properties because he claimed they left homes smelling of curry.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said it has applied for an injunction at Central London County Court against the landlord, who lives in Boughton Monchelsea, over his controversial lettings policy.

Speaking to KoS earlier this year, Mr Wilson, who failed in a bid to run for the role of Kent's police and crime commissioner, insisted his motivation in enforcing the ban was to avoid financial risk, after spending thousands of pounds removing the smell of curry from one of his properties.

He said at the time, denying claims of racism: "Yes, I accept not every individual coloured person likes and eats curry but I think a high proportion do and I had to go on probabilities."

ACTION: Fergus Wilson

EHRC chief executive Rebecca Hilsenrath said: "We have asked the court if it agrees with us that Mr Wilson's lettings policy contains unlawful criteria and, if so, to issue an injunction. As this is now formal legal action we will release further information at a later date."

Mr Wilson, long regarded as Britain's biggest buy-to-let investor with hundreds of properties in Kent, said: "Like any business we are consistently fine-tuning to best advantage."

Defending his latest lettings criteria, he said: "I am merely taking economic steps to ensure that we do not end up with people who are unable to pay their rent."

He added: "Given that I have not had any Indian or Pakistani person apply for a house during the past five years, I am not sure what the EHRC seeks to achieve."

His banned list also included single parents, "battered wives", zero-hours workers, plumbers, pet owners and people with the surname Wilson.

Advocacy group Hope Not Hate has described Mr Wilson as "the unacceptable face of the housing crisis" and compared him to racist bigot Alf Garnett from BBC sitcom Till Death Us Do Part.

STAR: Kent raised Joanna Lumley

Lumley: Bafta is absolutely fabulous

JOANNA Lumley says she is in "paradise" after winning the Bafta Fellowship award.

The actress, who grew up in Canterbury and attended Mickledene School in Rolvenden, near Ashford, as a boarder, gave what many described as the best speech of the night at last Sunday's glitzy London ceremony.

The gong was presented to Ms Lumley by her Absolutely Fabulous co-star Jennifer Saunders.

Ms Lumley, 71, said: "I'm unbelievably honoured, you don't even dream of it, you don't even think of it, then the letter comes and you don't believe it.

"We are lit and furnished with words and costumed and made up, we have stunt performers to make us look better, we have people who feed us and dress us and we arrive and people say 'you were so funny in that' and you say 'yes, thanks'. It's all somebody else.

"This for me is paradise, I am in the company that I wished to keep ever since I was young

"I wanted to be with the people who left race and religion and gender and shoe size outside the door."

The Bafta Fellowship is a lifetime achievement award and previously won by the likes of Helen Mirren, Bruce Forsyth, David Frost and Ms Saunders.

Prolific burglary duo sentenced to prison

TWO burglars who spent the winter raiding homes in Sevenoaks, Swanley Edenbridge, Ightham, Bromley, Surrey and Walthamstow for cash, jewellery and phones have been jailed.

Garry Ponder, 47, no fixed address and 25-year-old Thomas Webber, formerly from Coventry, went on a burlgary spree between November 2016 to January.

Ponder pleaded guilty to seven charges of burglary and was sentenced to five years and three months imprisonment. Webber admitted six burglary charges and a charge of theft and was sentenced to four years and six months prison at Maidstone Crown Court.

Det const Andy Julier said: "Ponder and Webber targeted homes often located in isolated areas, stealing possessions worth in excess of £150,000. Their crimes have caused a huge amount of anguish and distress to victims. Both men will be now be subject to investigations under the proceeds of crime act."

Uni masterplan takes another step forward

THE University of Kent's masterplan for its Canterbury campus has moved a step closer with publication of a key report.

The document outlines feedback received during an extensive consultation on the plans with neighbours, partners and stakeholders in the city.

A series of stages now commence, which the university says will include further consultation and opportunities for comment before a complete framework masterplan is published.

In 2016, the university published a concept masterplan that contained ideas on how best to develop the Canterbury campus over the next 30-50 years.

A spokesman said: "The university is grateful to all those who took the time to participate in this process, which included presentations to a number of local organisations and groups as well as public exhibitions, a leaflet drop to residents and information online."

The report details how the consultation was conducted and summarises points raised.

Polling cards printed with wrong name

THOUSANDS of polling cards had to be redelivered to residents in Thanet this week after a printing blunder saw them printed with the wrong constituency name.

Some 11,500 cards were issued to homes in the villages near Dover earlier this month but "a clerical error" stated they were in the Thanet North, rather than South Thanet constituency.

South Thanet includes areas across both Thanet and Dover councils areas.

Thanet District Council has apologised for the mistake and is issuing a revised poll card with a letter to each household over the coming days.

"This does not affect residents right to vote and the rest of the information contained on the poll card, including the location of their polling station, was all correct," a spokesperson said.

Voters in the district take to the polls on June 8 to elect members of parliament for the two districts, with Conservatives Sir Roger Gale and Craig Mackinlay both looking to defend their seats.

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Village rules out court fight against Thames crossing plan

By Tom Pyman
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VILLAGERS set to be most affected by the building of the Lower Thames Crossing say they will not be mounting a legal challenge to the decision.

Last month, the government finally confirmed what most were expecting, when it revealed it would be building the tunnel under the Thames east of Gravesend.

It will see new roads built cutting through swathes of the Gravesham countryside in a bid to ease traffic flows at the notorious Dartford Crossing.

Shorne Parish Council, one of the communities to be hit, confirmed it had sought legal opinion from a barrister over the Department for Transport's controversial announcement.

However, the council was told there were "insufficient legal grounds" for a successful challenge against the consultation process, and that a challenge on the decision itself would be "doubtful".

As a result, it has decided not to embark on a legal challenge itself but insisted it may still provide evidence and support for any other challenge which may be mounted, with "a reasonable chance of success in overturning the decision".

ROUTE: How the crossing will look when the Lower Thames Crossing is built

Gravesham Borough Council set aside £150,000 for a potential judicial review in its budget and is also understood to be seeking legal advice, however it too has spoken before of a hesitation to pursue any legal battle, with the resulting spending of public money on legal fees, if there is no realistic chance of being successful.

Gravesham MP Adam Holloway says he will continue to fight the decision and told KoS earlier this month he was prepared to lose his seat if necessary such was his opposition to the plan.

The Lower Thames Crossing is expected to cost some £6 billion and will link the A2 near Shorne with a new access route to a tunnel under the Thames which will then eventually link to the M25 near North Ockendon in Essex.

Last week KoS revealed there was an ambitious plan to build a tram route alongside the crossing in order to further ease congestion. Those behind the scheme are now seeking £500m to fund the project.

Thanet CCTV in need of vital cash boost

COUNCIL chiefs in Thanet will discuss on Tuesday proposals to axe the district's entire CCTV network.

Officers warn that unless significant investment is given to the current system urgently, it is highly likely parts of the network will stop working without the option to repair.

The current system is so out of date police could use less than half of the footage in 2016 due to poor quality images.

Trio of teens charged over Razvan murder

DETECTIVES have now charged three teenagers with murder following the death of a homeless Romanian man in Maidstone woodland.

The body of Razvan Sirbu, 21, was found in the Loose Valley conservation area. Two 18-year-olds and one 19-year-old, all from the local area, appeared before magistrates.

Southern's next strike

WORKERS at Southern Rail are set to take their 32nd day of strike action in the year-long dispute over driver-only trains on Tuesday, May 30.

Guards and drivers who are members of the RMT union will stage a 24-hour walkout.

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Carter reshuffles his pack after local election landslide

KENT County Council leader Paul Carter has announced a shake-up of his cabinet after the Conservatives' emphatic triumph in the local elections earlier this month.

The group won 67 of the 81 seats with the Liberal Democrats emerging as the official opposition with seven seats.

John Simmonds has relinquished his role as deputy leader - though still holds his post as cabinet member for finance - and is replaced by Peter Oakford, who is also taking on a new role as cabinet member for strategic commissioning and public health.

Susan Carey has been appointed cabinet member for customers, communications and performance while Eric Hoston replaces Gary Cooke as member for corporate and democratic services.

Elsewhere, Graham Gibbens, Roger Gough, Matthew Balfour, Mark Dance and Mike Hill reprised their roles as chiefs of adult social care, education, environment and transport, economic development and community and regulatory services respectively.

Cllr Carter said: "This is a very strong team that harnesses the very best talents at County Hall."

Olympian, reverend and social services expert dies

TRIBUTES have been paid this week to the reverend Nicolas Stacey - a former Olympian, naval officer, journalist and social services pioneer.

Perhaps most famous for holding up his friend, the athlete Roger Bannister as he collapsed after crossing the line in his record-breaking first sub-four minute mile in 1954, he passed away aged 89 after suffering a chest infection. He had lived in Selling, near Faversham, for the past 30 years.

He moved to Kent in 1974 after a naval career which had seen him selected for his running ability in the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki where he proclaimed himself the "fastest white man in the world". At the time he was also studying to become a priest.

He also enjoyed a career as a journalist writing for the likes of The Observer.

After a spell as deputy director of Oxfam, he became director of social services in Ealing before taking over the role at Kent County Council.

He returned to the Church as chaplain to 200 sex offenders in Maidstone Prison, before serving time as parson in Selling.

Speaking to KoS four years ago, he said of his athletics career: "I trained for the Olympics at the same time as training to be a priest. I was at the theological college, where we lived a rather monk-like life. We weren't allowed to speak after 9pm until the next morning. I would be doing that and the next weekend I was racing in Paris with 100,000 people cheering me on."

Teacher nabs top award

A BIOLOGY teacher from Chatham and Clarendon Grammar School in Ramsgate has been honoured by Oxford University in its annual Inspirational Teachers Award.

She was one of 10 state school teachers to be honoured in such as way after being nominated by Oxford student Jamie Fowler.

Crash witnesses sought

WITNESSES to a smash near Cranbrook are being sought after a man had to be flown to a London hospital by air ambulance.

The crash took place at 10.45pm on Thursday when a silver Toyota Avensis on the A262 towards Lamberhurst when it hit a tree by Clayhill at Smiths Lane .

Friends raise cash fund

FRIENDS and family of a motorcyclist killed on the A228 Peninsula Way in Medway last Sunday have raised more than £1,700 this week.

Ollie Jennings, from Crayford, was killed in the crash and his girlfriend left badly injured.

Blaze at a care home

A FIRE at a Canterbury care home in the early hours of Wednesday morning forced residents to have to be evacuated.

The firm broke out in a ground floor bedroom at the Pilgrims Lodge at 1.15am. Firefighters brought it under control. No one was reported injured.

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Tory fury at rude slogans

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

A CONSERVATIVE parliamentary candidate has slammed "scum" who scrawled obscenities on his campaign posters.

Gordon Henderson, who is looking to defend his seat in Sittingbourne and Sheppey in the general election next month, took to social media to hit out at the vandals who defaced the material last weekend.

In a 400-word rant on Facebook, Mr Henderson said he was more concerned with the distress the graffiti was having on young children in the area than himself, suggesting he had faced harsher abuse while growing up on a Chatham council estate.

The Tory, who coasted to victory in Swale in 2015 with almost 50 per cent of the vote, said he would be putting up new posters throughout the area over the coming week.

He wrote: "Although it is unlikely the person [responsible] will be reading this post, since he, or she, appears only to be able to think in words of four letters or shorter, I would like to make the following points.

"Whoever you are you probably think you were being clever abusing me in the way you did, however, you simply demonstrated that you are an imbecile and you do not understand the concept of democracy, which attributes are probably interconnected.

"You probably thought you would upset me calling me a 'see you next Tuesday', but you are wrong.

"I grew up on one of the toughest council estates in Chatham and have been called far worst names. In fact somebody once called me a socialist. Shock horror!"

Mr Henderson said the vandals had caused "distress and upset to perfectly innocent people" and revealed he had received a number of emails from constituents who saw the posters while stuck in traffic on the Lower Road on Sheppey.

"You were responsible for that distress. I hope you feel proud of yourself," he added.

"I have no idea which political party you support, but whichever party it is, I am sure its local candidate is ashamed they represent scum like you and will make public their disgust at your actions by liking this post."

The general election takes place on June 8.

CROSS: Gordon Henderson says he's not upset by people calling him a 'see you next Tuesday'

Hottest day of the year so far

GRAVESEND recorded the hottest of the year so far as the mercury soared to 25.8C in the town.

After weeks of chilly and windy weather, this week saw the sunshine finally return, with the high temperature recorded on Tuesday.

The figure beats the year's previous best, also recorded at Gravesend, of 21.8C in March.

However, don't expect a sun-drenched weekend.

Forecasters say temperatures will range from 17-20C with plenty of sunshine - but the chance of showers too.

A20 limit set to be removed

WORK finally began this week on removing the 40mph speed limit on a key stretch of the A20 road heading into Dover.

Drivers and politicans alike have slammed the limit in recent months and called for the imminent return of the national speed limit between the Roundhill Tunnels and Aycliffe, which highways chiefs have confirmed should be in place in July, in time for the summer getaway.

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ELECTION: Voters take to the polls across the county on June 8

Chorus of criticism grows over 'archaic' election deposit system

More than £50,000 was sent to the Treasury following the last two general elections in Kent because of under-performing candidates. Is it a fair process and can we expect more in next month's vote?

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

GREEN Party chiefs in Kent insist not appearing on the ballot paper in the general election is "a far bigger risk" than the prospect of losing thousands of pounds in a failed attempt to win power.

As political parties last week confirmed the candidates they want to field in next month's general election, each will have had to pay a £500 deposit for the privilege of standing.

Candidates who win more than five per cent of the total number of votes in that constituency will have their cash returned, as is usually the case for political heavyweights such as the Conservatives and the Labour Party.

The smaller parties, however, face the prospect of racking up substantial financial costs if they fail to generate sufficient support when voters take to the polls.

Parliament says the policy, along with the requirement to provide signatures of 10 registered electors from the constituency, known as subscribers, is employed "in order to encourage only serious candidates to stand".

However, polling watchdog the Electoral Commission has called for the deposit system to be scrapped in recent years, describing it as "unreasonable".

The destination of those forfeited deposits, which across the county tallies up to make tens of thousands of pounds, and millions nationwide, is not widely known, however.

Returning officers running elections at Kent councils send the cash to the Treasury and its Consolidated Fund which is, essentially, a large bank account used for government spending.

Payments from this account must be authorised in advance by the House of Commons and the government presents its 'requests' to use this money in the form of Consolidated Fund Bills.

Countywide, in the last two elections, more than £50,000 has been sent to the Treasury through forfeited deposits in the 17 Kent seats, with £29,000 racked up in 2010 and a further £23,500 five years later.

The Greens' bill came to some £7,000 in 2015 after failing to scratch the surface in 14 constituencies despite fielding a candidate in each area.

And with the polls predicting an overwhelming Conservative majority this time around, particularly in a county as traditionally blue as Kent, those figures may grow even more after the electorate have their say on June 8.

"Yes, we lost quite a few deposits last time but we have to continue," the party's Kent chair, Stuart Jeffery told KoS.

"People want to be able to vote for us and not being able to do that is a much bigger risk than losing £500.

"It's going to be blue across the board, and no, we're not going to win any seats, but there's something about the number of votes you get and the message it sends to Westminster.

"It strengthens the case for proportional representation and bolsters our standing as a party."

Mr Jeffery also points out that the party makes back the majority, if not all, of the cash it loses in forfeited deposits - a staggering £221,000 nationwide 24 months ago - through Short Money.

This is government funding made available to all opposition parties in the House of Commons that secured either two seats or one seat and more than 150,000 votes at the previous general election.

The Greens won more than 1.1 million votes last time out and when parliament dissolved earlier this month, the party had one MP, Caroline Lucas in nearby Brighton Pavilion in Sussex.

Chiefs have successfully orchestrated a cross-party alliance in recent days by convincing the Liberal Democrats not to stand against the party leader in three weeks' time.

Mr Jeffery has tried to drum up support for a similar deal in Kent with Labour as well as the Lib Dems, but these hopes have been emphatically dashed by the red and yellow parties, who are also contesting all 17 seats in the county.

Responding to the commission's suggestion that a shake-up is needed, Mr Jeffery said: "The entire electoral system is fundamentally flawed.

"Perhaps you could increase the number of subscribers to 20 or 30 so you can demonstrate some backing.

"The idea of keeping people from standing because of an archaic rule is fundamentally undemocratic."

Ukip may also be in for a sizeable loss if this month's county council elections are anything to go by, where the party had its representation at County Hall completely wiped out, just four years after winning an impressive 17 seats, and becoming the main opposition to the Conservatives.

In 2010, purple votes were few and far between and some 13 candidates saw their £500 fees disappear.

Interestingly however, in a quite remarkable turnaround in 2015, all Ukip candidates retained their deposits after a soar in interest, with the party winning at least five per cent of votes in every constituency it contested.

But with many believing the party is now on a downward trajectory, it may revert back to 2010 levels as it continues to grapple with its apparent identity crisis.

We have compiled a list of all the parties who lost a deposit at the 2015 general election. However, it should be noted the Greens and Liberal Democrats contested each of the county's 17 seats, while other parties tended to stand in only a handful.

ELECTION DEPOSITS LOST IN 2015

Y	*DEPOSITS LOST*
Green	**14**
Liberal Democrats	**9**
Independents	**5**
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	**4**
English Democrats	**2**
Monster Raving Loony	**2**
Socialist	**2**
Party for a United Thanet	**2**
Christian Peoples Alliance	**1**
Young People's Party	**1**
National Health Action Party	**1**
Al-Zebabist Nation of Ooog	**1**
FUKP	**1**
We Are The Reality	**1**
Manston Airport Independent Party	**1**

DESTINATION: Council chiefs want to see a service to the airport linking Ashford, Tonbridge and Edenbridge

Direct train to Gatwick airport at heart of county rail demands

Kent County Council this week made its official response to the controversial consultation on the south eastern rail franchise, clearing up its position on a number of the government's proposals

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

KENT rail chiefs are pushing the government to include a link between the west of the county and Gatwick Airport in the next franchise, KoS can reveal.

At its annual rail summit at County Hall this week, Kent County Council bosses outlined what they want to get out of the deal for train services around the county over the next decade.

At the heart of its plans, principal transport planner for rail, Stephen Gasche said, was establishing a regular service to the Sussex airport - located barely 15 miles from some towns and villages in the west of the county.

The government is currently consulting on how best to run rail services in the south east when the current franchise, operated by Southeastern, comes to an end next year.

"The idea proposed by the Department for Transport was the possibility of a future inter-regional service linking together the Reading to Gatwick service, which is run by Great Western, with a service that carries on via Edenbridge and Tonbridge to Ashford," Mr Gasche told KoS.

"So you would actually have an inter-regional service going from Ashford to Reading going via Gatwick and that would knit together the different parts of the south east region outside London with each other and with Gatwick.

"If that were possible either in this franchise or beyond it, that's something we'd strongly support.

"We had consultants prepare a business case a few years ago to look at a service from Ashford to Gatwick, but unfortunately it didn't stack up for a positive business case which the Department for Transport has to have to consider any new rail service.

"We think this new proposal is one that's well worth looking at, with the way demand is growing for regional rail transport.

"Great Western have been very successful in developing the Reading, Guildford and Gatwick line, so much so that they're now operating two trains an hour.

"We want to build on that and see if we can work with them and have something that runs across to Kent because we really need a rail link from Ashford, Tonbridge and Edenbridge to the airport."

Mr Gasche also dismissed any suggestions of a rift with London mayor Sadiq Khan over metro routes in the north of the county.

The government's transport secretary Chris Grayling came under fire last year for rejecting Mr Khan's proposals for Transport for London to take control of certain services currently operated by Southeastern.

Conservative Mr Grayling was accused of putting politics ahead of passengers after a leaked letter showed he opposed the devolution of suburban rail services in the London and north Kent area to keep the network "out of the clutches" of a Labour mayor.

Mr Gasche this week suggested TfL could have pumped more cash into rolling stock, but would not necessarily have improved services.

His comments back up those of Mr Grayling, who has denied any politicisation, insisting Mr Khan's business plan fell short - a claim the mayor denies, saying his case sets out "substantial benefits" for passengers in the region.

Indeed, earlier this year, Charlie Elphicke, who was the Conservative MP for Dover and Deal at the time, told the House of Commons he thought London was acting like "a Hunger Games-style capital seeking to subjugate Kent".

The Tory-controlled KCC, however, has publicly supported the mayor's plans and admitted disappointment when Mr Grayling ruled out such a move last autumn.

Quizzed on whether reliability of metro services in north Kent would have improved with TfL in control, Mr Gasche said: "It's difficult to say; that all depends on the relationship between Transport for London and Network Rail.

"If TfL had been offered the franchise they would have been able to access a lot more capital investment for new trains, for example, but the service level, at least for the initial years, would have been the same.

"But we are where we are, and we're operating with a network that gives us high speed, mainline and metro services, and we need to make sure it's right in all those parts.

"I think there's a difficult relationship between the mayor's office and the DfT but there isn't any problem at all between the mayor or TfL and KCC, we work closely with TfL officers anyway on all sorts of things."

Managing director of Southeastern, David Statham, said the firm had made significant improvements to its services in recent months, with 94 per cent of trains arriving within five minutes, and 72 per cent arriving on time.

Meanwhile, the council also this week called on the government to "commit" to the future of train services to smaller stations in light of fears over suggestions to shake-up services between Ashford and Tonbridge.

The DfT caused a stir in its consultation by suggesting some trains on that line would no longer stop at stations like Pluckley, Headcorn, Staplehurst, Marden, and Paddock Wood, in a bid to speed up journey times.

Campaigners at Save Kent Trains have previously warned such plans would be "disastrous" for local communities and could potentially lead to the closure of the stations altogether.

A petition against the proposals was launched and received more than 10,000 signatures before being closed earlier this month as parliament dissolved ahead of the general election.

The document was backed by parliamentary candidates from a range of parties as well as the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

In its official response to the consultation, KCC said: "The Ashford to London via Tonbridge service would need to retain its current stopping pattern to reflect the growth in demand at intermediate stations on this route.

"There is considerable housing development underway or planned at Paddock Wood, Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn and Pluckley, which will require the continuation of the present service levels in both peak and off-peak periods.

"Therefore the new franchise should commit to these service levels without any change in either the frequency or the stopping pattern on this section of route.

"As Ashford and most east Kent stations already have a high speed service, there is in any event less imperative to speed up this mainline route."

Transport secretary Chris Grayling has had to defend the controversial consultation on a number of occasions, insisting the proposals are merely suggestions and that the government will listen closely to all feedback provided.

Mr Gasche attempted to allay fears by telling members at the summit: "There are absolutely no plans by the DfT or KCC for any reduction in services."

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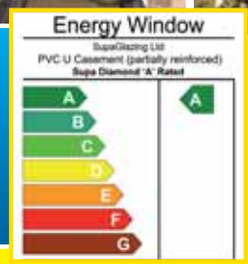

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IMPACT: Bizarrely, the harsh frost may have helped top-heavy trees

Apples hope for the best after frosts

Cold spell last month hit our most famous crop, but full extent will not be known until harvest

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

APPLE farmers in the county are collectively keeping their fingers crossed in the hope April's sharp frosts have not played havoc with Kent's most famous crop.

Some farmers around the UK are predicting a plunge of 70 per cent for popular varieties such as gala, Braeburn and red Windsor as a result of the cold snap damaging buds at a crucial stage of their growth.

Kent, however, is not expecting anything quite so drastic.

Harvesting here will start at the end of June and the National Farmers' Union says it is hoping weather conducive for good growth between now and then will ensure trees recover.

A leading expert of fruit farming is Nigel Jenner, an agronomist for the British Growers Association.

He also works at the family's Great Sheephurst Farm, at Marden, where 120 acres of the 150 acre total is dedicated to apples and pears.

Mr Jenner told us: "It really is a mixed bag for Kent farmers. There are some who have been hit really hard by this air frost, which is worse than a ground frost.

"Those that have suffered are mainly on the coast where the sea air usually keeps temperatures a little more even. But the air was so cold that it was not able to maintain a decent temperature and the air frosts took their toll.

"But in other areas, it has been a bit of a blessing. This is because this year we were looking at over-stocked trees.

"Normally, we want to see about 120 apples per tree, but in some places it was looking more like 600 to 800 which is far too much. This would have had the effect of a poor growth for the apples and will stop them colouring. That means they can't be sold on.

"When that happens, farmers can use manual labour to thin out the flowers on the trees to get the correct ratio between leaf and flower. This is really expensive, so the air frosts have thinned out the trees naturally, so for some, the frosts have done a good job.

"It is not accurate though, so it will be a few weeks yet before we get the final picture of what this year's harvest is going to look like."

Robert Hinge runs 2,000 acres on Sheppey and Upchurch of arable and fruit, and he told us: "It has been a bit odd and really the luck of the draw when it comes to geographic position.

"During the frosts, the cloud came in from the north west, so anything west of, say, Swale did OK, and everything beyond that had some troubles.

"We have four farms, one of which has been hit very badly in the Faversham area. The damage levels have been patchy."

He added: "I belong to one or two industry bodies and marketing organisations and from a recent meeting, the general consensus on how the county has coped is that we don't yet know, and won't know for a few weeks yet.

"No one has been very badly hit - it would be awful if someone lost their entire crop. It is also down to which variety you look at.

"Coxes have been much worse than gala. It is all depending on which stage the blossoms were at when the frosts hit. Anything that flowers late is probably not so bad, but anything that flowers early, like the Braeburn, will have done much worse."

Last month we reported how the frosts had played havoc with the county's vineyards.

Meanwhile, the particularly dry weather is also causing problems for arable and livestock farmers. It has been the driest winter in two decades.

That has forced growers in the Stour Marsh and Romney areas to start irrigating their crops six weeks earlier than usual, while a shortage of grass could push up animal feed costs.

E-cigarettes usher in major changes

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

SMOKERS of e-cigarettes are seeing a host of new rules and regulations come into force this weekend, introduced in a bid to tighten up the safety of increasing popular vaping.

A list of seven laws came into force this Saturday - among them restrictions on the size of liquid bottles, the size of tanks and a cap on the level of nicotine.

And while most retailers and health professionals are in agreement that the regulations are sensible steps, some say users may be put off using the devices as a result.

The electronic cigarettes have been one of the success stories in recent years, providing an alternative to cigarettes which has won the support of health authorities who believe they play a vital role in luring smokers off their expensive and dangerous habit.

Powered by battery, users burn a flavoured liquid and inhale water vapour laced with nicotine. While expected to be far safer than convention cigarettes, the impact on health of long-term use has not yet been able to be studied.

Now the government's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency has issued the new rules, including one that requires products to be cleared by them before being sold. Dan Marchant runs online retailer Vape Club. He said: "I don't believe any retailer doesn't welcome the standards which regard ingredients used, emissions testing and product safety.

"However restrictions on bottle sizes, tank capacity and e-liquid strength have caused a lot of unnecessary headaches.

"None of these measures provide any additional level of safety, efficacy or convenience - they are arbitrary rules, with no real world benefit, and simply make it less convenient for a smoker to make the switch."

Sam Knights, supervisor at Mad Cow Vaping in Rainham, said he is trying to look at the positive side of all the rules, including the reduction in bottle size.

He told us: "The reduction in bottle size from 30ml to 10ml will give customers more variety.

"That said, a lot of people are finding it hard to transition to the smaller bottle.

"It is a positive spin, but you have to look at the positives when new laws are brought in giving us no alternatives. I am not so sure the laws were necessary, but now they are here, we have to live with them. I can see the idea behind them, trying to make it all safer."

TJ's Cigarettes has stores across Kent, but Ross Steel at Margate, revealed some producers have already found a loophole.

He told us: "The limit on tank sizes means they need refilling more often which is an inconvenience for no benefit.

"The bottle size is another inconvenience. The bigger bottles will now be sold with a nicotine shot sold separately. You can't sell a bottle of liquid that contains nicotine that is more than 10ml.

"So, if you want a bigger bottle, it will have to be one with zero milligrams and add a nicotine shot to it. Companies are getting around this law. It is a loophole, but I don't know if it is going to be closed."

As for the rest of the rules, he said: "I totally agree with tamper-proofing bottles and restricting what goes into the liquids."

A spokesman for Kent County Council, which looks after public health matters, said: "We support the use of e-cigarettes alongside other measures to give up smoking. Our commissioned service providers in Kent already support people who want to use e-cigarettes."

SMOKE: Increasingly popular, but long-term health impact is not known

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6. Vape products get new labels and warnings
7. All products approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency before they hit the shelves

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In addition, dance group Diversity will be returning with an all-new dance routine to thrill the crowd. They appeared alongside the likes of Maverick Sabre and the Lightning Seeds last year.

Also on this year's line-up are Supreme Queen - a tribute act to rock legends Queen - who will be romping through a whole host of the band's hit-heavy back catalogue.

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One of the organisers said: "There will be entertainment all the family can take part in, ensuring no moment is left wasted."

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Blow as planners reject 150 homes

By Luke May
luke.may@archant.co.uk

PLANS for more than 150 homes and a new maritime facility in Greenhithe have been rejected by Dartford councillors, despite being earmarked for approval.

Dartford councillors met on Thursday night to discuss the plans from house-builders Crest Nicholson to build a 16-storey tower block alongside 20 houses, known as The Pier development, which hoped to bring 151 homes to Ingress Park.

Council officers had recommended the plans were approved, after developers pledged to bring a shop and a maritime facility, which was also hoped to be used by the Sea Scouts, the area.

There was mixed opinion from residents before the meeting, with praise for the new facility and an "opportunity to get first time buyers on the ladder", but fears had been raised over parking provision and that a 16-storey tower block could be an eyesore.

Councillor Derek Hunniset chaired the council's development control board meeting.

He said: "There were a number of things in the application councillors were concerned about.

"Traffic management including a lack of parking was highlighted, as well as losing local amenities such as the open spaces in the area.

"The development would also have meant losing a Thames footpath so that it would have to be diverted back inland around the development, councillors did not see this as acceptable, as we want to keep our riverfronts open.

"If the applicant were to come back with an amended application, we would obviously take a look at the proposal again."

SETBACK: Artists' impression of The Pier development in Ingress Park, Greenhithe

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Specsavers' optical and hearing teams become Dementia Friends

With visual impairments common among those with dementia, Specsavers is ensuring a trip to the opticians and audiologists is as comfortable as possible for them.

In the run up to Dementia Awareness Week (15-21 May), Specsavers employees nationwide are becoming Dementia Friends, an initiative run by the Alzheimer's Society. Every store now has at least one team member who is a Dementia Friend and understands the needs of customers with dementia a little more. The Specsavers Healthcall teams that carry out home visits are also becoming Dementia Friends.

Specsavers is also using Dementia Awareness Week to remind anyone over 55 to undergo regular hearing tests, as research suggests that people with untreated hearing loss are more likely to develop Alzheimer's. Hearing tests are free at Specsavers.

Dr Nigel Best, Specsavers clinical spokesperson, says: 'People with dementia may not be able to recognise or articulate the issues that many of us face when we begin to lose our sight or hearing – but the effects are the same. Being more aware of dementia is an incredibly positive development for our teams and our offering to customers.'

Those with dementia commonly experience problems with their sight and visual perception, causing them to misinterpret the world around them. Some sufferers can experience hallucinations. On top of that, research has revealed that almost half of dementia patients in care homes are wearing glasses with the wrong prescription, leading to increased isolation.

Laura Stallerbrass, store manager at Specsavers Forfar, has encouraged all her team to do Dementia Friends.

'We aim to provide a safe environment for all of our customers. I can definitely see a shift in attitudes to dementia which is lovely to experience.'

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30,000 jobs and plan to beat Stack in report on Manston

RiverOak Strategic Partners published more projections this week in its bid to re-open the airport, but the site owners claim the report has "exposed" them

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

RE-OPENING Manston Airport will offer a solution to fears of Operation Stack rearing its head post-Brexit and would create 30,000 jobs over the next two decades, a report has claimed.

RiverOak Strategic Partners (RSP) announced last month it is launching a public consultation into its plans to obtain a compulsory purchase order for the site through a development consent order (DCO), shortly after the general election in June.

Ahead of that consultation, it has published its final report in a four volume set, considering the socio-economic impact of re-opening the airport, which closed in 2014.

The site is currently owned by bosses behind the Stone Hill Park project - which aims to deliver 2,500 homes and leisure facilities, while insisting the area's history and heritage will be respected and maintained - and have recently claimed work on their own plans could begin as early as this year.

RSP says the report it commissioned, prepared by aviation academic Dr Sally Dixon of Azimuth Associates, includes business modelling, interviews with airlines, freight forwarders and integrators.

It also suggests pent-up demand for air freight is currently costing the UK economy more than £2 billion in lost income.

It comes just over six months after a Thanet District Council-commissioned report by Avia Solutions concluded that aviation operations on the site were very unlikely to be financially viable.

While council leader Chris Wells has stood by that report, it was largely dismissed by campaigners fighting to re-open the airport.

RSP chiefs claim more than 4,200 people would be employed directly at the airport site within 20 years of operation, with a further 26,000 jobs created in the wider economy.

It is said employment at the airport would be a mix of role types, with posts made available in freight services, passenger services, rescue and fire fighting services, airport operations, maintenance, site and freight security, administration and air traffic services.

Director George Yerrall said: "From the date that the airport reopens, almost 6,000 jobs would be created - around 850 jobs on the airport site itself and a further 5,000 indirect and catalytic jobs in the wider economy, in associated industries or businesses.

"The positive economic impact grows each year along with the airport.

"We have forecast up until the 20th year of operation, by which time 30,000 people in Thanet and east Kent would be able to trace their job to the revival of the airport.

"We have a real opportunity to tap into a proven demand for air freight that other south east airports simply can't meet.

"The £2bn lost to the UK economy each year is set to almost double by 2050, even with an additional runway at Heathrow.

"Manston Airport is ideally placed to help recapture this traffic, which is being displaced to northern Europe.

"In meeting this demand, we create huge employment potential for Thanet and provide a powerful economic boost for the nation.

"We are in the process of discussing with local colleges and businesses how best to maximise career and supply chain opportunities in Manston."

Dr Dixon is an academic attached to Cranfield University and is described as a specialist in stakeholder involvement with major airport infrastructure, lecturing on stakeholder influences on airport master planning to Cranfield MSc students.

She holds a PhD from Cranfield and an MBA from the University of Kent and is a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

"Thanet District Council's economic development plan is ambitious," she said.

"The council is starting from a challenging situation, given that local employment, productivity and wages are generally lower than in other parts of Kent.

"My research evidences that a vibrant air freight hub at Manston will be vitally important in stimulating thousands of high quality jobs at the airport and in the local area, helping the council to deliver an economic output that puts Thanet on a par with the rest of Kent."

Freight bosses last week called on Theresa May to hold crunch talks with newly-elected French president Emmanuel Macron over fears he

CONTROVERSY: The Manston saga took yet another twist this week

could tear up the agreement on cross-Channel border controls.

The prospect of a changing relationship with France, as well as the need for Britain to negotiate free trade agreements with the European Union after Brexit, has sparked concern that there could be delays on a regular basis at Kent's ports, which could in turn lead to a return of Operation Stack, which blighted the county in the summer of 2015.

The RSP report nods to the possibility that higher tariffs and non-tariff barriers will affect trade and increase the time taken to cross borders and suggests re-opening the airport could offer a solution.

"This will particularly affect the Channel crossings where increased security checks and ensuring tariffs are paid where necessary may cause congestion and delays," it says.

"Operation Stack has demonstrated the impact on the surrounding area and has caused considerable problems for transporters of perishable goods.

"Businesses may decide to switch from trucking to air freight and Manston Airport would provide the much needed capacity in the south east."

RSP is not the only party working to re-open the airport, however, as an unnamed US investor was revealed to be in contact with the council earlier this month, and pensions fund investor Edi Truell is also understood to still be at the negotiating table.

While RiverOak has previously moved to quash "myths" suggesting it would introduce a significant number of night flights, Stone Hill Park bosses said in response the firm had been "exposed" in its own report, claiming there would be an average of some 85 flights every 24 hours, taking into account suggested growth in both freight and passengers services.

"What this report does, in devastating terms, is expose the claims that RSP's plans would not require night flights," said spokesperson Ray Mallon.

"This blows a hole in the assurances given by [Tory candidate] Sir Roger Gale and others that there would be no need for any flights during anti-social hours.

"It would devastate the quality of life for local residents in terms of noise and air pollution.

"I also note that the matter of HGV movements, which would be generated by a busy cargo airport, hasn't even been mentioned by RSP – their silence speaks volumes.

"Other consultants have produced forecasts that make clear an airport is not viable and that is also the real world experience of operators on this site.

"RSP rely on speculation and conjecture to arrive at these figures, the people behind SHP rely on a proven track record of turning round failing sites and delivering real homes and real jobs."

Cllr Wells was also contacted for comment but failed to return our calls before we went to press.

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Cathedral pilgrims see the divide at heart of Holy Land

From walking in the footsteps of Christ to the reality of Israel-Palestine dispute

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

GUNS, conflict and hardship sat alongside beauty, spirituality and discovery after more than 30 pilgrims from Canterbury Cathedral headed off for a 10-day tour of the Holy Lands of the Middle East.

The group of 34 took in such sights as the place of Jesus Christ's birth and burial, as well as soaking up the quite remarkable atmosphere of the likes of Jerusalem and Bethlehem; an environment where religious significance mingles with today's on-going battles between Israel and Palestine.

The Revd Canon Nicholas Papadopulos, from Canterbury Cathedral, said the group was amazed at just how busy the key areas were with tourists.

He told us: "The holy sites of the Holy Land are almost always crowded, and bustling with pilgrims from every corner of the globe.

"Tour guides try to keep their groups together; chancers try to sell postcards or embroidery; attendants call for quiet.

"Yet the rhythm of worship keeps going. Our visit to the tomb in which Christ was laid was disturbed by the processions and prayers of at least three different Christian denominations.

"And in the midst of all the hubbub it's impossible not to be moved by the reality that for generation after generation countless faithful people have offered countless prayers in these places, places that are so intimately linked with the Bible stories that many of us have known since childhood. Nazareth; Bethlehem; Jerusalem: these place-names, all so familiar, now mean something real."

The trip saw the group spend three days by the Sea of Galilee and six days in Bethlehem.

Key sights visited included the birthplace of Christ at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the site of his crucifixion and resurrection at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

In temperatures of more than 40 degrees centigrade they also ventured into the desert to Qumran and took to the salty waters of the Dead Sea.

VISIT: Richard Llewellyn, Malcolm Shepherd and Nick Papadopoulos

Pilgrim Rev Lizzie Hopthrow added: "It was an amazing experience to follow 'in the footsteps' of Jesus - standing in the places where Jesus healed and taught brought the Bible stories really alive for us both, and the peace that we discovered in many places we brought home with us in our hearts.

"Water seemed to follow us everywhere. As well as the Sea of Galilee, we went to Jacob's well, dipped our feet in the River Jordan and bathed in the Dead Sea. Yet it was incongruous to discover that the healing and harmony that Jesus brought to so many people when he walked in the Holy Land is not the experience of much of the population today.

"Although we found the division and separation between faith groups shocking and distressing we were inspired by places such as the Tent of Nations where a family of farmers, threatened by eviction from their farm, respond by refusing 'to be enemies' and by non-violent resistance. We met people who, though oppressed, live the peaceful way that Jesus taught and we will never forget their smiles and hopeful attitude to their problems."

The pilgrimage also coincided with a pastoral visit made by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy Land.

This meant that there were familiar faces in the congregation at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem when Archbishop Justin Welby preached there earlier this month.

For many, however, the trip brought into sharp focus the tensions in this long-troubled region.

One of the pilgrims, Valerie Ainscough, told us: "I deliberately hadn't thought too much about the visit in advance as I wanted to go to Israel with an open mind.

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HOLY: Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

"The highlights of the journey were the spectacular scenery, the calm and peace of Galilee, the bare hills of the desert and the arid heat of the Dead Sea area which hit 45 degrees.

"Jerusalem was an assault on the senses, hardly changed in character I imagine since Biblical times; a mass of different races, religions. I hadn't expected so many Asian tourists but there were many from India, Korea and the Philippines.

"The sad part of course was the division between people highlighted by walls and checkpoints.

"All Israeli soldiers carry guns and we heard gunfire one night from our hotel room. I felt the ancient way of life and culture of the Palestinians was being eroded away as the illegal settlements creep ever closer."

Canon Nick added: "The divided and unsettled nature of the land is never far away: the vast majority of the Palestinian territories remain under occupation. Teenage soldiers carry guns on the streets of Jerusalem.

"Getting to our hotel in Bethlehem meant navigating the checkpoints in the separation wall which now encircles the 'little town' of the carol.

"Wherever we could we listened to local people and heard stories of dislocation and loss: villages destroyed, land lost, families parted.

"It was often heart-breaking, and it sometimes felt as though 2,000 years after the coming of the Prince of Peace he was still being crucified in the daily suffering of the men, women and children of the land where he once walked."

The visit also took in a visit to see spectacular dancing from the young people of the Alrowwad cultural project in the Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem, which is still home to more than 3,000 Palestinians.

"Alongside the incredible experience of walking in the footsteps of Jesus," adds Cannon Nick, "we heard heart-breaking stories from the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories, and inspiring stories from those who are committed to creative, non-violent resistance to it. We have come home immeasurably enriched, and ever more determined to pray for the peace of Jerusalem - and all its people."

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Chelsea set to bloom into life as our stars look set to dazzle

It's the most prestigious horticultural event and it gets under way tomorrow

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

GREEN-fingered experts will be hoping to dazzle the judges and thousands of visitors when the Chelsea Flower Show blooms into life this week.

The annual horticultural showcase takes place from Monday through to Saturday in London.

And among the many hoping to impress will be representatives from the county with their eyes fixed on winning a prestigious gold medal or silver gilt.

Garden designer, Fiona Cadwallader, from Canterbury, is one of those who will be spending this weekend fine-tuning her creation ahead of Monday's star-studded opening day which normally attracts a host of celebrities and royalty.

Ms Cadwallader is taking part in the artisan gardens section and has taken inspiration from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1797 romantic poem This Lime Tree Bower My Prison to create her Poetry Lover's Garden.

She said: "This is the first show garden I've created, and so I wanted to create a garden that is personal to me, and one that I'd like to sit in. I also wanted to make sure I created something that let me show off my creativity while incorporating my interests.

"The Poetry Lover's Garden is what I'd call a tranquil retreat in which to sit outside in the late afternoon sunshine reading poetry to the sound of water. I've used both modern and traditional materials to create a structured but relaxed setting.

"References found in This Lime Tree Bower My Prison include ivy-clad dry-stone walls, a waterfall in the form of a stainless-steel water feature, and beanflowers, while polished concrete represents ease, and reflection. The gates I've used, I hope, will offer a hint of escape into a less-seculded world."

It's certainly no easy task to get into the show itself with organisers the Royal Horticultural Society demanded all entrants undergo a strict judging criteria before the select few are chosen. That includes submitting a portfolio of ideas and previously created garden designs to a panel who make the final decision.

DELIGHT: Visitors will experience a host of colour and scents. Pictures: RHS

Adds Ms Cadwaller: "I'm really excited that the first time I've applied to create a garden at Chelsea, my application has been accepted.

"Creating the show garden has really come together in the last seven or eight months, as I was chosen to design one just before Christmas. It has taken quite a long time, really, but I do have fantastic builders from Landform Consultants to put it together for me.

"I've been to the show as a visitor for years now, so I suppose my love for it is what has encouraged me to take part this year.

"But I honestly don't think you'd be able to create a garden for Chelsea if you weren't already a garden designer. It takes so much time, and though definitely worth it, it is stressful. I am nervous, but I know I'll get an adrenaline rush when I'm there and then the excitement will properly kick in. It would be really great if I went home with an award."

The ultimate reward is a sought-after gold medal followed by silver gilt, silver and then bronze. For the best of the best, the biggest accolade is being crowned best in show.

Hoping to raise money and awareness will be hospice Ellenor which has its main site in Gravesend and operates across the county and into south east London.

It will be working alongside Chilstone, makers of handcrafted architectural stone and garden ornaments in Tunbridge Wells, and garden designer Ali Dempster.

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PATRON: Charlotte Hawkins will visit Ellenor's fountain centrepiece

A fountain placed in the middle of the garden, created by Chilstone, will be named The Ellenor Giving Family Fountain.

The fountain operates with recycled rain water collected from the living sedum roof of Mr Dempster's garden studio.

On the Monday, Ellenor's patron, former Sky and now Good Morning Britain presenter Charlotte Hawkins, is attending to support the charity.

The hospice is encouraging supporters to come along to the stand and donate to the fountain. All donations enable them to continue to provide care and support for families facing terminal illness.

Ms Hawkins will be unveiling Chilstone's Leda and the Swan sculpture, depicting Helen of Troy's conception, which has been chosen as a finalist for the Royal Horticultural Show's product of the year.

Rachel Holweger, director of income generation at Ellenor said: "We are absolutely delighted to be part of this exciting project – what a wonderful opportunity for us to let more people know about the care provided by Ellenor across Kent and south London to very sick children and adults facing terminal illness.

"As we are so reliant on funds to provide this care, we are extremely grateful to Chilstone for involving us in this way.

"If you are visiting the show across the week, please come and visit the stand and throw some coins into our fountain – your generosity will allow us to continue to change the lives of people facing terminal illness."

Chilstone's fountain named after Ellenor will be located at stand 84, Hospital Way, adjacent to the main avenue.

The BBC will be broadcasting live programmes from the show throughout next week.

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SPOOKY: First there was the cartoon, then the books, then the movies and now the musical has extended the magic of the Addams Family

Sam's in the family way as she creeps in as Morticia

Addams Family musical arrives this week at the Marlowe with a familiar face

TELL Samantha Womack that she looks like death warmed up and these days, she'll take it as a compliment – it means she's got her make-up right.

Because if meeting a watery demise earlier this year in EastEnders wasn't enough, Samantha's latest project also sees her dabbling with death as she tours in the British premiere of the Broadway hit musical The Addams Family, playing Morticia Addams, the monster mum of a family of ghouls.

The Addams Family is based on the cartoons of Charles Addams. First published in The New Yorker magazine in the 1930s, the subsequent TV series spawned several spin-off shows, movies and books.

Now the show has made its way across the pond, creeping into Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre for a string of shows from this Tuesday (May 23) to Saturday and then returning to Dartford's Orchard Theatre at the end of October - just in time for Halloween.

But Samantha, whose career includes leading roles in South Pacific and Guys and Dolls, plus a starring role in a previous Marlowe panto, admitted the idea of doing another musical at this point in time wasn't high on her 'to do' list.

"I agreed to go to the initial meeting, but I wasn't convinced," she admits. But preparing for that meeting entailed a certain amount of research, during which Samantha found her mind being changed.

"Immediately I got a very clear sense of how I should play the role. I'd never played a character that was so deadpan before and as I read the script I really started to enjoy it. I also really liked the character-style of singing, which was different to me. Suddenly I couldn't stop thinking about it; I was being seduced.

"When I realised I really wanted to play Morticia I was as surprised as everyone else, although it helped that the producers and creative team were just the warmest group of people I had ever come across. There's something very infectious about people who are so passionate about something."

Bagging the role, she found herself in expert company. As well as a talented cast, who between them have appeared in just about every major musical of the past 20 years, The Addams Family has been written by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, the creators of multi award-winning Jersey Boys, with music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa.

"We're really lucky," says Samantha. "It's a show with a credibility that is really exciting. The cast is phenomenal – musical theatre royalty –including Les Dennis. Les has starred in loads of musicals, including Spamalot, but he is also a really knowledgeable comedy buff. He is going to be great as Uncle Fester."

And she cannot wait to return to our cathedral city.

She explains: "I was there last year and the kids were with me. We absolutely loved it and spent a lovely day exploring Canterbury Cathedral. My daughter was really taken with Canterbury and we are really looking forward to going back."

Tickets for this week's shows are still available - to book at the Marlowe visit marlowetheatre.com.

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Diversity join X Factor stars at Mote Park's Big Day Out event

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

FAMILY-friendly festival the Big Day Out rolls back into Maidstone's Mote Park this summer offering another star-studded line-up.

This year headline acts will include X Factor 2015 winner Louisa Johnson who will be performing fan favourites Bad Behaviour, So Good and Tears as well as some of her unreleased music.

Also on the bill are are X Factor colleagues Reggie 'n' Bollie and Atomic Kitten, best known for their number one hit Whole Again.

In addition, dance group Diversity will be returning with an all-new dance routine to thrill the crowd. They appeared alongside the likes of Maverick Sabre and the Lightning Seeds last year.

Also on this year's line-up are Supreme Queen - a tribute act to rock legends Queen - who will be romping through a whole host of the band's hit-heavy back catalogue.

The event has scaled back though from last year's two-day event, and will now be a one-day show on Saturday, July 1.

STAR: Louisa Johnson, who won X Factor, will be the headline performer

One of the organisers said: "It will be a one-day festival this year, but that doesn't mean it will be any less fun. There will be entertainment all the family can take part in, ensuring no moment is left wasted."

In addition to the music, there will also be appearances from children's TV favourites.

Among them will be Chase and Marshall from Paw Patrol, CBeebies' Mr Bloom performing a live stage show and fairytale princesses will be performing classics from Disney's Frozen and Beauty and the Beast.

There will also be comic superheroes roaming the festival.

There will be a host of performance classes among them a circus schools plus hip-hop and ballet classes.

For those wanting to run off a little energy, there will be Bounce Land once more, while the festival's bubble team will be presenting a special show throughout the day for visitors to enjoy.

Big Day Out takes place on July 1 and runs from 11am until 10pm at Maidstone's Mote Park.

Tickets are £25 for adults and £12 for children. Under 5s go for just £1. See bigdayoutfestival.com.

A night out with Boycie

ONLY Fools and Horses actor John Challis will entertain fans about life on the show, as well as the rest of his career, in a performance at Gravesend's Woodville Theatre on October 12. Tickets on sale now.

Coward's custard surprise

AN amateur production of Noel Coward's Cowardly Custard will be performed at Broadstairs' Sarah Thorne Theatre next month.

Three performances will be staged on June 2, 3 and 4. Tickets for the show are £12 in advance or £14 on the door. See sarahthornetheatre.co.uk.

Blooming anniversary

STROOD Gardening Club hosts its 10th annual flower show on July 8 at St Nicholas Church in the High Street.

Exhibits will be on show from 2.30pm to 4pm. Entry is £1 and accompanied children free.

Brahms from memory

THE Aurora Orchestra returns to the Gulbenkian in Canterbury on Friday, May 26 - the world's only ensemble presenting entire symphonies played from memory.

The orchestra will perform Brahm's First Symphony. It begins at 7.30pm. Tickets thegulbenkian.co.uk.

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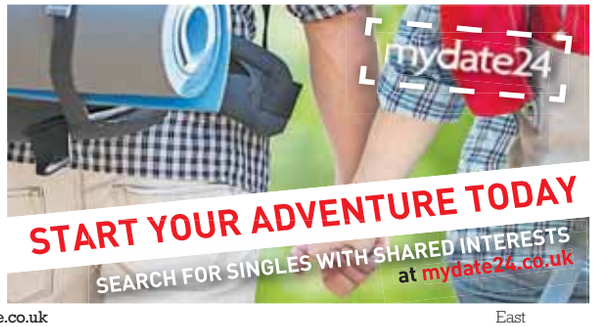

Austin 7 Rally drives back

THE Austin 7 Rally returns to Bewl Water at Lamberhurst on June 18.

Also open to other pre-1972 cars, commercial vehicles and motorcycles, entry to the event is free. Parking at Bewl is £2.

Ahoy there, me hearties!

PIRATES head to the Historic Dockyard Chatham this May half-term for a special treasure trail.

The HMS Gannet welcomes visitors from May 27 to June 4 and will be in a pirate cove complex complete with beach, palm trees and even a giant deck chair.

Festival's Running Wild

AUTHOR Michael Morpurgo's novel Running Wild will be brought to life on stage at the Marlowe Theatre later this month.

It runs from May 31 to June 3 as part of the children's festival.

Undercover's full strength

ORGANISERS of the Undercover Festival in Margate's Dreamland say this year's line-up is its best in its five-year history.

It runs over September 8-9. A spokesman said: "The line-up is stronger than ever before especially as Tom Robinson has made this his only full band date this year in the south east."

Joust a minute, this is a real summer highlight

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THE pomp, colour and excitement of the historic art of jousting returns to Hever Castle this summer.

Built in the 13th century, the picturesque venue will take a step back in time to thrill spectators with a taste of what life was like when the royal courts would stage extravagant - and often brutal - jousting events.

The 21st century version at the site near Edenbridge will be a more sanitised version of events, but no less entertaining, with displays of actions, stunts, falls and fights in an authentic arena. There will even be a royal box for regal visitors.

Taking place throught the summer, the events will see knights battle it out both in the saddle and on foot in one-to-one combat, in pursuit of finding this season's ultimate champion.

Joining the procession from the castle's forecourt will be actors in historic dress performing as Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and the knights of royal England.

Hever was childhood home of Anne Boleyn who would go on to be Henry's second wife.

The castle would later pass into the ownership of another of his wives - Anne of Cleaves.

So with a rich royal heritage, the event will look to provide an authentic experience.

And if the jousting doesn't float your boat, well you can always lose yourself in the magnificent surrouding gardens - including the Italian Garden which saw 800 men taking two years to dig out a 38-acre lake and which is now hitting full maturity.

Jousting weekends take place on July 15-16, 22-23 and 29-30. Then, in August, they will run on August 12-13, 19-20 and 25-28.

Visitors can bring a blanket from which to sit and watch the action, or from the medieval spectator stands, available on a first-come, first-served basis at a small cost.

Admission prices for the gardens only are £14.20 for adults, £12.70 for seniors and £9 for children. A family ticket costs £38.90.

HORSEBACK: Watch the knights take part in competition

GROUND: And engage in hand-to-hand combat too

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Musical family fundraise for youth orchestra

Teen cellist, Thomas Nettle, who sang for royal family, hopes to raise £100 with family concert

A TEENAGER from Leigh, near Sevenoaks, who has sung for the royal family, the Pope, and Barack Obama, and his musical family are coming together to play in concert with hopes of raising money for the National Youth Orchestra (NYO).

Thomas Nettle, 15, a specialist musician at Wells Cathedral School, has been a cellist in the NYO for the last year, and now hopes to raise £100 for the orchestra, something each member is encouraged to do.

He said: "We've played together as a family in concert before, and it's always been really fun. Last year we played the last 15 minutes of a concert together and I presented us to the audience, so I thought to raise money for the NYO, it would be fun to recreate that for a longer period of time."

Thomas, who hopes to turn to academic music at either Oxford or Cambridge when he leaves school, comes from a highly musical background.

His dad, Terry, plays viola in the orchestra of English National Opera, his mum, Joanna, plays the flute in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and his sister, Isabelle, is studying violin at the junior department of Guildhall School for Music and Drama.

The National Youth Orchesra has a strict criteria when it comes to choosing who can join.

Musicians have to be aged between 13 and 18, and play at grade eight, distinction or equivalent level before applying.

TALENTED: Thomas Nettle

A spokesperson from NYO said: "NYO is a charity, and we need to raise £1.5 million every year to fund our activities. Our musicians are in a unique position to help make this possible and it is an important aspect. Over the year, there are a number of ways we will ask members to be involved in fundraising."

During his primary school years, Thomas also sang in the choir at Westminster Abbey, performing for the royal family, the Pope, and former American president Barack Obama.

He said: "It's actually not that scary performing in front of those big names, especially seeing as when I did it there was 20 other boys up there with me.

"But I have a really nice memory from the time I sang for the Pope. In the middle of the service, the Sistine Chapel Choir's conductor turned to me and started talking to me about being in the choir.

"And also when I met Barack Obama, he came round all of us and spoke to us indiviually."

Tickets for this concert, on June 3 at St Mary's Church, Leigh, are £5 per adult and can be purchased on the night. Children go free with an accompanying adult.

The performance begins at 7pm and drinks and snacks are available in the interval for a donation.

If you'd like to donate to Thomas but are unable to attend the concert, email tbnettle@gmail.com

Sci-fi stars heading in

STARS of the likes of hugely popular films and TV shows Star Wars, Game of Thrones and Harry Potter are to attend the latest edition of science fiction event Sci-Fi By The Sea in Herne Bay on June 25.

Fans will be able to see exhibits, costumes and stands, as well as explore gaming zones, shopping, live music stands and attractions.

For more information and tickets visit scifibythesea.co.uk.

Baddiel's family affair

COMEDIAN, author and TV presenter David Baddiel will be bringing his critically acclaimed show My Family: Not the Sitcom to Dartford's Orchard Theatre and Canterbury's Marlowe next May.

The show is currently winning plaudits during a long run at London's Playhouse Theatre. He plays Dartford on May 2 and Canterbury on May 18. Tickets for both shows are on sale now.

Instrumental duo show

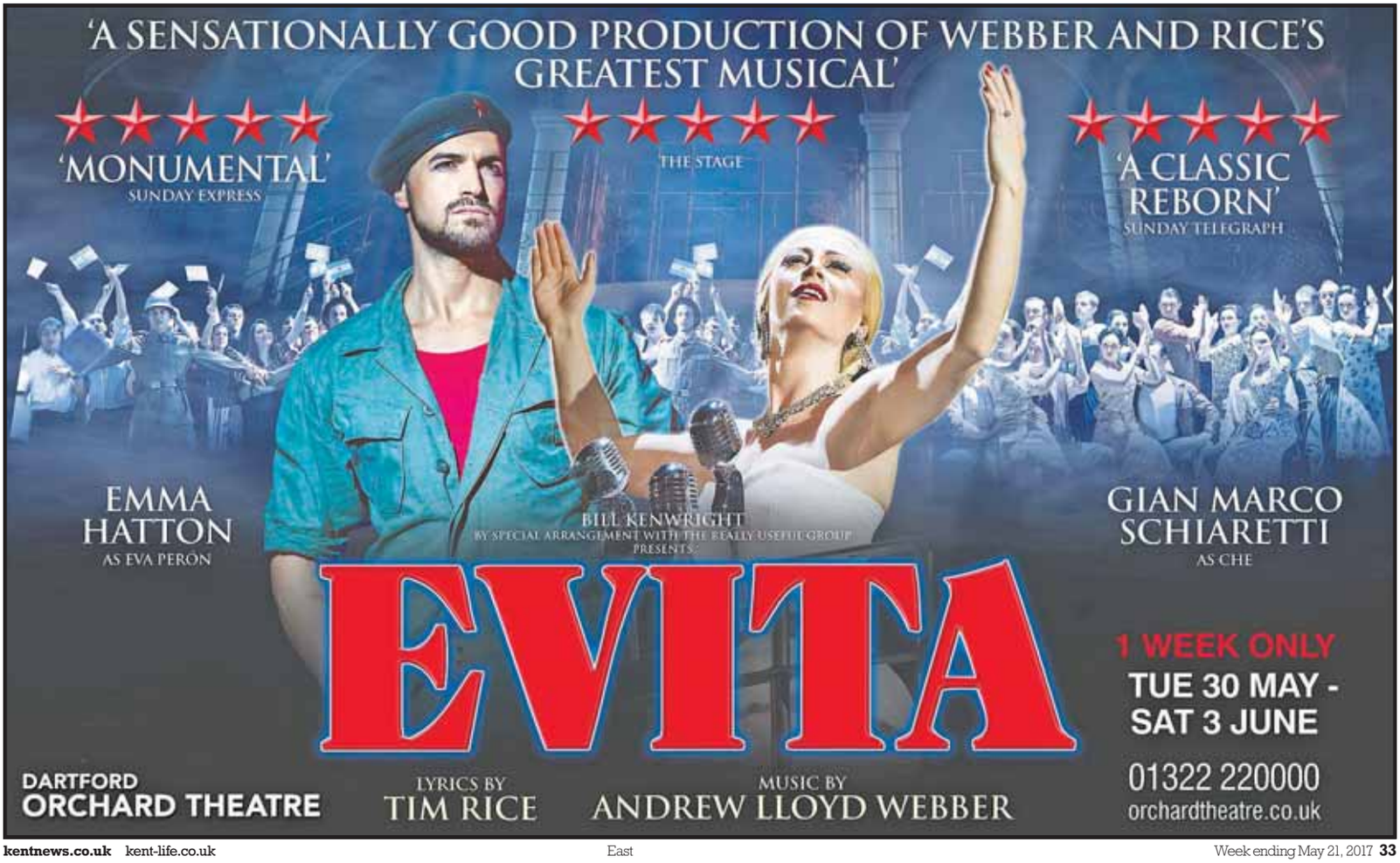
CONCERT guitarist and composer Richard Durrant is coming to Tunbridge Wells with Paraguayan harpist Ismael Ledesma.

This concert is a chance to witness a collaboration by two instrumental stars performing a combination of virtuoso solos and duets from their album Durrant y Ledesma. They perform at the Trinity Theatre on June 16.

Tenor's workshops

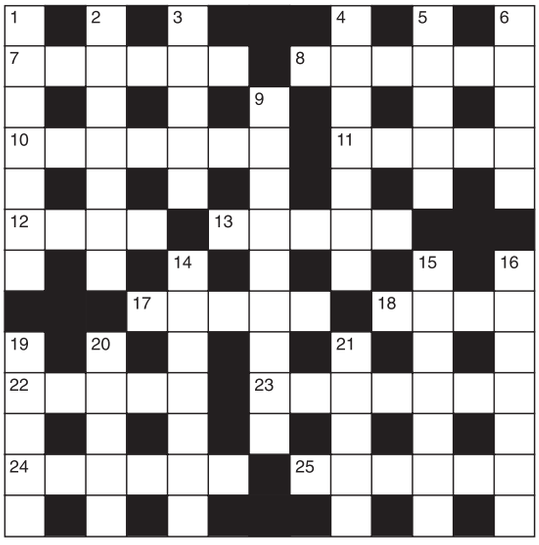
OPERATIC tenor Thomas Spencer has a new record out in June, and as part of his tour running alongside it, he'll be hosting a series of workshops, warm up sessions and performances.

His tour will see him perform alongside Tunbridge Wells' Camden Road Choir on June 8, and Royal Tunbridge Wells' Orpheus Choir on July 8, before his album, The Journey, is released on June 23.



PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across
7. Fame (6)
8. Betterment (6)
10. Furnish (7)
11. Commerce (5)
12. Whip (4)
13. Divest (5)
17. Malice (5)
18. Manage (4)
22. Following (5)
23. Storm (7)
24. Rough (6)
25. Hit (6)

Down
1. Struggle (7)
2. Release (7)
3. Two (5)
4. Belong (7)
5. Raid (5)
6. Drive (5)
9. Poverty-stricken (9)
14. Tyrannise (7)
15. Clique (7)
16. Pagan (7)
19. Pertness (5)
20. Purloin (5)
21. Gives out (5)

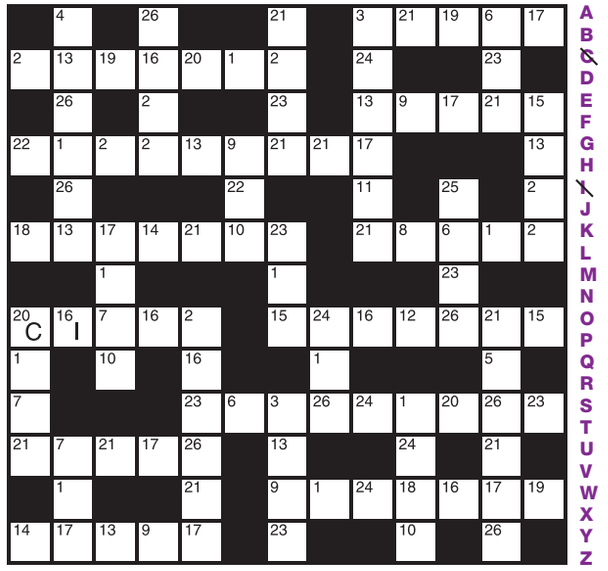
Cryptic

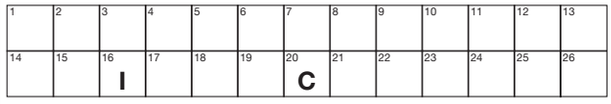
Across
7. Set back after the spring floods (6)
8. Foreign office desk? (6)
10. Under it changes are yet to be made (7)
11. Light with a tendency to grow less? (5)
12. Cheese that's made the wrong way (4)
13. Dignified way to help (5)
17. Storytellers (5)
18. Observed part of the act, we hear (4)
22. I'm illuminated round the edge (5)
23. Dish of caviare one is greedy to have (7)
24. Empty one container into another (6)
25. A smallholder in the fruit trade (6)

Down
1. Put it on without being told? (7)
2. Fond of, to some extent (7)
3. Some vestige of sanctity? (5)
4. Keep us in a bad spot (7)
5. Hurry up they're hard to fathom (5)
6. Extravagant when out and about (5)
9. A leader of opinion (9)
14. Far from friendly? (7)
15. Draughtsman's intentions? (7)
16. Discovers something new in airways? (7)
19. Being made to work (5)
20. Boat strike? (5)
21. Number get a fever that's ill-defined (5)

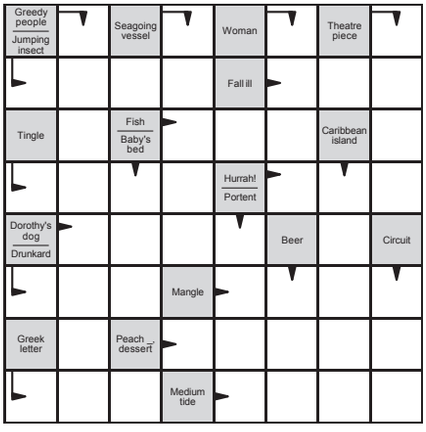
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.





Arrowword

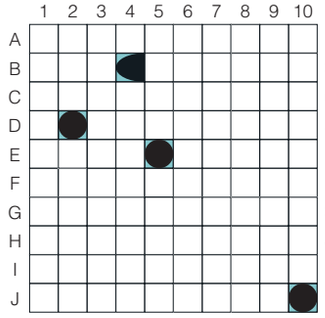


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

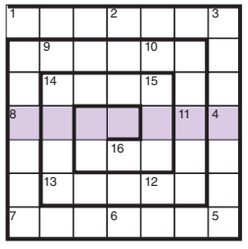
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Hairless
2. Trade
3. Lengthy
4. Movable barrier
5. Simple
6. Three feet
7. Arab sailing vessel
8. Caution
9. Body part
10. Eager
11. Bird's home
12. Mexican food
13. Darts line
14. School test
15. Fail to hit
16. Rotisserie

Keyword clue: A fish

SUDOKU

Hard

2			8		9	1		7
7				6			2	
								6
4	9				7	6		
		6	2				8	1
3								
	2			1				8
1		5	7		3			4

Easy

	1				6		4	
6		9	5		3			8
	3		8			1		
	6	1			5			7
	7	3		6		5	8	
9					7	6	2	
3		4			8			
			4		9	8	6	5
	5		2	7			3	

Solutions

Arrowword

Battleships

Double Crossword
Cryptic
Across: 7 Sabes; 8 Bureau; 10 Unfried; 11 Taper; 12 Edam; 13 Staid; 17 Liars; 18 Seen; 22 Limit; 23 Avarice; 24 Vacant; 25 Punnet. Down: 1 Assumed; 2 Partial; 3 Relic; 4 Sustain; 5 Deeps; 6 Outre; 9 Editorial; 14 Distant; 15 Designs; 16 Invents; 19 Slave; 20 Smack; 21 Vague.
Quick
Across: 7 Renown; 8 Reform; 10 Provide; 11 Trade; 12 Lash; 13 Strip; 17 Spite; 18 Cope; 22 After; 23 Tempest; 24 Coarse; 25 Strike. Down: 1 Grapple; 2 Unloose; 3 Twain; 4 Pertain; 5 Foray; 6 Impel; 9 Destitute; 14 Oppress; 15 Coterie; 16 Heathen; 19 Sauce; 20 Steal; 21 Emits.
Codeword
1=A, 2=L, 3=B, 4=P, 5=X, 6=U, 7=V, 8=Q, 9=W, 10=Y, 11=Z, 12=F, 13=O, 14=K, 15=D, 16=I, 17=N, 18=M, 19=G, 20=C, 21=E, 22=H, 23=S, 24=R, 25=J, 26=T
Word Spiral
1 Bald; 2 Deal; 3 Long; 4 Gate; 5 Easy; 6 Yard; 7 Dhow; 8 Warn; 9 Neck; 10 Keen; 11 Nest; 12 Taco; 13 Oche; 14 Exam; 15 Miss; 16 Spit.
Keyword: Whiting

Sudoku - Easy

5	1	8	7	2	6	3	4	9
6	4	9	5	1	3	2	7	8
7	3	2	8	9	4	1	5	6
2	6	1	3	8	5	4	9	7
4	7	3	9	6	2	5	8	1
9	8	5	1	4	7	6	2	3
3	9	4	6	5	8	7	1	2
1	2	7	4	3	9	8	6	5
8	5	6	2	7	1	9	3	4

Sudoku - Hard

2	6	3	8	5	9	1	4	7
7	4	8	3	6	1	5	2	9
9	5	1	4	7	2	8	3	6
4	9	2	1	8	7	6	5	3
8	1	7	5	3	6	4	9	2
5	3	6	2	9	4	7	8	1
3	7	9	6	4	8	2	1	5
6	2	4	9	1	5	3	7	8
1	8	5	7	2	3	9	6	4

Could nautical be nicer for you this year?

Figures suggest more tourists are opting for the convenience and relaxation of ferries. **Sarah Marshall** reports

Ferry travel can be soothing... though it helps if the sky is blue and the sun is shining! Picture: PA

Designed to highlight the comfort and convenience of travelling by ferry, National Ferry Fortnight (until May 20) again offers consumers a host of great deals to entice them to choose water travel over air. The work of industry body Discover Ferries, which masterminds the two-week promotion, seems to be paying off. Figures suggest the number of cars taken by ferry has risen from 8.6 million in 2015 to nearly 8.8 million in 2016: a 1.7% increase.

Clearly, more people have realised it's often cheaper and easier to travel by ferry.

"The sustained growth in car-carryings is particularly good news for the sector as we see more people recognise the advantages of simply hopping into their own car and enjoying the flexibility, value and freedom of a break by sea, rather than the pressure of travelling through an airport," claims Bill Gibbons, director of Discover Ferries, a body made up of 10 ferry company members.

More passengers now travel between the UK and France by ferry (14.6 million) compared with flying (10.8 million), according to the 2016 Ferrystat report.

By reducing the stress and strain often suffered by families in transit, ferry travel is said to improve the quality of a holiday.

According to research conducted by Discover Ferries, two thirds of parents say holidays and trips away from home are the only real time they get together. "Our members do their utmost to make the ferry journey the very start of the family holiday experience," says Bill Gibbons.

"Unlike an airplane, where you're strapped in alongside each other in front of computer screens, a ferry journey gives people time to stretch their legs, eat a meal or watch wildlife together. National Ferry Fortnight will be a celebration of ways to spend that treasured time together."

Move fast to grab a bargain

Book ferry travel before May 20 to take advantage of these offers:

- **Up to three children in a family can travel for nothing as part of a "kids go free" offer with Brittany Ferries on selected daytime sailings to France from Portsmouth, Poole and Plymouth. Travel up to August 31. Visit www.brittanyferries.com/NFF or call 0330 159 6820.**
- **"Take a Friend for Free" when you book with Stena Line on all routes on the North and Irish seas. Valid on all sailings until December 17. Book using the code 'BUDDY'. Visit www.stenaline.co.uk/buddy.**
- **Travellers to Scotland's west coast can take advantage of CalMac's offer to book a car "plus one" and bring a friend for free. Travel before October 22. Visit www.calmac.co.uk/NFF2017.**
- **More offers can be found at www.discoverferries.com**

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Sure Start plan is recipe for disaster

THE decision of Medway unitary council to close 19 Sure Start centres will kill off the essential local ingredient of the scheme.

Medway is an authority of 250,000 so by setting up just four so-called hubs, as they propose, in a few places so as to save money is a disaster for the future of Medway.

The reason the centres exist at all is that the government in this country took notice of research done in America for their Head Start programme.

They found the first three years of a child's life are the most important period for intelligence and social development. Sure Start has been designed to give as many children as possible the very best start in life by starting at a very early age mixing with other local children and getting used to schooling before they start formal school.

The decision to close the centres has been made in a completely random way without any regard to the children and their future development. Ultimately there is no suggestion it has any objective beyond saving money at the expense of our children's futures.

The prosperity of the Medway towns depends on the ability of our young people, the workers of the future: we can't afford the closure of Sure Start centres.

Derek Munton,
Rochester

Key time in fight for airport revival

WE are reaching a critical point in the restoration of the Manston Airport site to full commercial aviation.

It is now three years since the last KLM flight took off; an unhappy anniversary that we hope will not be repeated many more times.

All the evidence points to the fact that Thanet, Kent, south east England and indeed the whole United Kingdom need the opportunities that this airport can offer.

This is, therefore, a good time to reiterate the absolute determination of our groups to support any realistic proposal to achieve this aim.

Why Not Manston?, Save Manston Airport Association and Kent Needs Manston Airport,

Farage surrender is not needed

I WAS a bit saddened when Nigel Farage questioned Ukip's future [KoS, last week].

All we now have is basically a load of Conservative 'remainers' doing the EU exit negotiations and all other 'remain' political parties waiting in the wings, so they can demand another vote until it goes their way.

Strange how all these 'remain' parties that won seats in the recent local elections, have not asked for a re-count?

To make this Brexit work, then we need people with faith in an independent England working with and alongside countries. I exclude Wales and Scotland, as they have dumped England's parliament for their own, so they can decide their own fate.

I would say Ukip is needed more than ever, as they started the process, so let them help complete it.

Millions of people need reassurance and leadership to confirm they voted the right way and those that voted to remain, or did not, to see the opportunities away from the over regulated, stifling and interfering EU jackboot.

No longer can MPs absolve themselves by saying 'it is an EU directive', they now can be challenged on their reasons and motives.

Terry Hudson,
Whitstable

LETTER OF THE WEEK

May is not champion of the nation's workers

THAT prime minister Theresa May has attempted to pitch the Tories as the party for workers is as laughable as it is hypocritical.

It was the Conservative government that tried to bring in anti-strike laws, has overseen an exponential growth in the number of workers expected to make a living on zero hours contracts and attempted to shut down trade unions.

At the same time, there are seven million working families in Britain who are living in poverty; there are more than a million people, including our hard working nurses, forced to rely on foodbanks all while people continue to see their real terms pay shrink and shrink.

Under the Conservatives, you can work hard, do everything expected of you and still find yourself living in poverty.

Under the Conservatives, you can be a dedicated and overstretched nurse and still be forced to rely on foodbanks - while your profession and our NHS is continually undermined and underfunded.

Under the Conservatives, you can be sure that if you have an issue at work your access to a union and your ability to exercise your rights will be limited.

Leaving workers in a precarious position, unsure if they're going to have enough money to pay their rent or buy food while trying to silence their collective voice is no way to create a happy, healthy workforce.

Theresa May's empty promises will not make us forget the Tories have treated workers with total disdain over the last seven years.

Keith Taylor
Member of the European Parliament for the south east, Green

• What do you think of the parties in the run-up to the election? Share your views on our letters page - email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.

Decision not to run a mistake

UKIP Canterbury branch officers going public with their decision not to stand a parliamentary candidate in Canterbury against Julian Brazier, before the time window closed on May 11 in the general election was, in my opinion, a serious error of judgement.

Going public even before the Kent County Council polls closed on May 4 was very damaging to Ukip candidates standing in Kent, not just in the Canterbury City North electoral division where I stood.

The article in KoS on April 30, headlined 'Joint candidates rejected' included reference to Ukip not fielding a parliamentary candidate, highlighting how voters might think Ukip had given up.

This is an exciting time to be a member of Ukip as Brexit approaches, so please do not be deterred by the growing pains as the party regenerates.

The opening skirmish in the Battle for Brexit may be over but the Battle of Britain has yet to begin!

Richard West,
Canterbury

Are Tories set to deliver soft deal?

COLIN Bullen is so right that the Conservatives are not really Eurosceptics [KoS letters last week].

I have not voted Conservative over this very reason since David Cameron hi-jacked the party.

The jury is still out regarding Theresa May who is quoted as saying 'it is my fierce determination to get the right deal for every single person in this country'.

This sounds like a soft deal is on the way, pleasing no one but remainers.

S Reeves,
Herne Bay

Let's celebrate women in sport

LOTS of women take part in sport, yet receive very little coverage in newspapers.

I would therefore really like to thank you for the positive pieces last week celebrating female success.

The forthcoming women's Cricket World Cup, and Phoebe Cumiskey's incredible success at kickboxing, made me proud to live in a country (and county!) where women are encouraged to reach such heights and are applauded for their achievement. I would like to see more articles on women in sport at all levels.

Karen Russell-Graham,
via email

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Live music at Broadstairs

by **Dennis Jackson from Cliftonville**

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photo taken from roof garden at the panorama

Residents rate Breton Court care home one of the top 20 care homes in South East England

Breton Court in Tenterden, Kent has been chosen by residents and their families as one of the Top 20 care homes in South East England.

There are 3,119 homes in the South East of England, with the top 20 receiving an award from the leading reviews guide to care homes, carehome.co.uk.

The award is based on reviews of the care home written by their residents, plus their friends and relatives.

Davina Ludlow, Director of carehome.co.uk, said:

"We feel the best people to rate a care home are the residents and their families and friends. Their reviews reveal that many care homes are warm and happy places to live, where staff go that extra mile to ensure residents have a good quality of life and feel cared for.

"Breton Court proved that they provide a high standard of care and we'd like to congratulate them on being a Top 20 care home in South East England! It's a wonderful achievement to be recognised for being a highly recommended home by the very people you care for.

"Finding the right care home can be so hard. We hope that our awards will help to make people's care home search that little bit easier."

Kath Jenkins, manager of Breton Court said: I would like to say a big thank you to all my staff, for their hard work, commitment, professionalism and the loving care they give each and everyone of my residents. Care is not just about looking after the residents, but must include the family of that resident, the family should be able to sleep at night knowing that their loved one is being cared for appropriately. Each resident and their family become part of the Breton Court family.

Breton Court Care Home, Grange Road, St Michaels, Tenterden TN30 6EE
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VALUE: Competitively priced and some models promise to hold on to decent value over the years

Suzuki supermini push as fresh-face Swift swoops in

COMPETITIVE pricing and comprehensive standard equipment will see Suzuki's all-new Swift supermini, which goes on sale on June 1, cost from £10,999 to £15,849 on the road.

Standard equipment for all Swifts, available only as a five-door model, sees the entry-level SZ3 model with 90PS, four-cylinder, 1.2-litre Dualjet petrol engine and manual transmission get six airbags, air conditioning, leather steering wheel, DAB radio with Bluetooth and four speakers, rear privacy glass, LED daytime running lights, 15in wheels, body-coloured door mirrors and front electric windows.

The mid-range SZ-T model, available with the 111PS, three-cylinder, 1.0-litre Boosterjet turbo petrol engine and manual transmission, adds rear-view camera, Smartphone link display audio, 16in alloy wheels and front fog lamps glass.

Range-topping SZ5 adds auto air conditioning, 16in polished alloy wheels, satellite navigation, advanced forward detection system, keyless entry and ingnition and rear electric windows. The SZ5 is available with a six-speed automatic transmission, mated to the 1.0-litre engine, as an option.

The SZ5 is also offered with even more emissions-focused mild hybrid manual versions – dubbed SHVS for Smart Hybrid Vehicle by Suzuki - of the 1.0-litre and 1.2-litre engine, the latter also gaining Allgrip on-demand four-wheel drive.

The 1.2-litre Dualjet engine offers CO2 emissions of 98g/km and 65.7mpg while the figures for the 1.0-litre Boosterjet engine are 104g/km (97g/km for the hybrid) and 61.4mpg with the manual gearbox.

The new Swift sits on a new-generation, light and highly rigid platform.

The Swift is also predicted to have strong used values with CAP's residual value forecast of 41 per cent over three years or 60,000 miles – many more than most owners will cover – for the SZ3 model.

KENT LIFE

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Toyota's bold move proves compelling

Love it or loathe it, you can't miss Toyota's new C-HR crossover and the drive lives up to the promise of those dynamic looks, says motors editor Andy Russell

IF Toyota wanted to get noticed in the family crossover market it's achieved it with the C-HR.

Short for Coupe High-Rider, it combines a coupe-like top half set on sport utility vehicle underpinnings with exciting exterior styling inspired by a cut diamond.

Toyota, not known for daring design, has to be applauded for being bold to maintain the concept car looks. You'll love it or loathe it but Toyota is confident of selling 16,000 a year in the UK and 100,000 across Europe, the market it was designed for.

There's the hybrid system, combining a 1.8-litre petrol engine with two electric motors, from the latest Prius and the 1.2-litre turbo petrol engine from the Auris.

Toyota predicts 75% of sales will be hybrid mated to the automatic continuously variable transmission (CVT) which is ideal for urban driving and main road cruising. Keen drivers will like the flexible, free-revving 114bhp 1.2 turbo petrol with six-speed manual and CVT automatic gearboxes, the latter also available with all-wheel drive.

A lot of effort has gone into ride and roadholding, designed for European roads and, according to chief engineer Hiroyuki Koba, our faster and more fluid driving style.

The C-HR's looks athletic and it feels sharp and agile through tricky twists and turns with good body control and plenty of grip while the supple suspension copes with broken road surfaces and wafts along motorways although wind noise is apparent at speed.

What you notice first is the sheer quality with good-looking, soft materials on contact points and the cohesive design of tasteful colours and trims.

If you have to travel in the back – once you've found the 'disguised' door handles – there's more leg and headroom than expected with that coupe styling.

The boot is not as large as many rivals at 377 litres but well shaped and the tailgate opens wide and high. Rear seat backs split 60/40 and fold flat.

Drivers will feel at home with the wraparound dashboard flowing into the doors and the raised eight-inch touch screen angled towards the driver.

Recessed instruments add to the sporty flavour along with swathes of piano black accents to show off the curves and contours.

The Toyota C-HR's styling won't suit everyone, for others it will be the key.

Either way, you'll never see Toyota in the same light again for the C-HR is an image-booster that's going to get people talking Toyota and that's good for the brand.

Car

Price: **from £23,685 to £28,085 (1.2T from £21,065)**

Powertrain: **1,798cc, 97bhp, four-cylinder petrol and 53kW electric motor generator (120bhp combined) with CVT gearbox**

Performance: **0-62mph 11 seconds; top speed 105mph**

MPG: **74.3 combined (17in wheels)**

CO2 emissions: **86g/km ((17in wheels)**

Warranty: **Five years or 100,000 miles**

Will it fit in the garage?: **L 4,360mm; W 1,795mm; H 1,565mm**

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Motability

*2017 C-HR Icon 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual at £595 Advance Payment. Model shown is C-HR Dynamic 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual at £1,795 Advance Payment, AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift at Nil Advance Payment, Auris Icon 5 door 1.6 D-4D Manual at £95 Advance Payment, Auris Touring Sports Icon 5 door 1.2T VVT-i Manual at £895 Advance Payment and Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual at £295 Advance Payment. Subject to availability. Please note that a total of 60,000 miles over three years are allowed on the Motability Contract Hire Scheme. Offer valid between 1st April and 30th June 2017. Available as part of the Motability Contract Hire Scheme.

C-HR Dynamic 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 38.1 (7.4), Extra Urban 55.4 (5.1), Combined 47.8 (5.9). CO_2 Emissions 135g/km. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 56.5 (5.0), Extra Urban 78.5 (3.6), Combined 68.9 (4.1). CO_2 Emissions 95g/km. Auris Icon 5 door 1.6 D-4D Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 55.4 (5.1), Extra Urban 74.3 (3.8), Combined 65.7 (3.8). CO_2 Emissions 110g/km. Auris Touring Sports Icon 5 door 1.2T VVT-i Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 47.9 (5.9), Extra Urban 67.3 (4.2), Combined 58.9 (4.8). CO_2 Emissions 112g/km. Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 53.3 (5.3), Extra Urban 68.9 (4.1), Combined 62.8 (4.5). CO_2 Emissions 119g/km. All mpg and CO_2 figures quoted are sourced from official EU regulated laboratory test results. These are provided to allow comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

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To discuss these opportunities, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Carolyn Flegg, Outpatients Manager on 01843 234569

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Closing date: 25 May 2017 Interview date: TBC
Qualifications and Experience

- Registered Nurse or Operating Department Practitioner
- NMC/HPC Registered
- Maths and English (GCSE or equivalent) Grade C or above.
- Ability to assess, plan and evaluate patient care
- Knowledge or research and evidence based practice
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To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Dennis Sutton Theatre Liaison Manager on 07833237881

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The ideal applicant should have…

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Closing date 23rd May 2017, 9.00am - Interviews week commencing 5th June 2017

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Closing date midday Thursday, 8 June 2017.
Interviews will be held on Thursday 15 June 2017.

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

IMPORTANT: THIS COMMUNICATION AFFECTS INTERESTS IN PROPERTY

THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (A28 CHART ROAD IMPROVEMENT) (COMPULSORY PURCHASE) ORDER 2017

The Highways Act 1980

The Acquisition of Land Act 1981

1. Notice is hereby given that the Kent County Council has made on the 11th May 2017 the Kent County Council (A28 Chart Road Improvement) (Compulsory Purchase) Order 2017 under Sections 239, 240 and 250 of the Highways Act 1980. It is about to submit this order to the Secretary of State for confirmation and if confirmed, the order will authorise Kent County Council to purchase compulsorily the land and rights described below for the purpose of;
   a. the improvement of highways forming part of or connected to the A28 Chart Road Ashford in the County of Kent between and including the Tank roundabout and Matalan roundabout to create a two lane dual carriageway with a bridge, junction improvements and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.
   b. use of land required by the Highway Authority in connection with the improvement of the highway aforesaid
   c. access by the Highway Authority to construct inspect and maintain the works
2. A copy of the order and of the accompanying map may be seen from 11 May 2017 between 9.00am and 5.00pm at Kent County Council, Main Reception, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ; Kent County Council, Highways & Transportation Offices Reception, Henwood Industrial Estate, Javelin Way, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8DH and Kent County Council, Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1AS
3. Any objection to the order must be made in writing to Secretary of State, National Transport Casework Team, Tyneside House, Skinnerburn Road, Newcastle Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7AR or nationalcasework@dft.gsi.gov.uk, quoting the scheme reference, A28 Chart Road, Ashford before **16 June 2017** and should state the title of the order, the grounds of objection and the objector's address and interests in the land. In submitting an objection it should be noted that your personal data and correspondence will be passed to the County to enable your objection to be considered. If you do not wish your personal data to be forwarded, please state your reasons when submitting your objection and the Secretary of State will copy your representations, with your name and address removed to the County, and if there is to be a Public Local Inquiry they will be seen by the Inspector who may give them less weight as a result.

DESCRIPTION OF LAND AND THE NEW RIGHTS

1. All interests in 1230 square metres of grassland and wooded scrubland to the north west of A28 Chart Road and to the north of A28 Matalan roundabout.

2. All interests in 9 square metres of paved area containing electrical pylon infrastructure to the south east of A28 Chart Road and to the north east of A28 Matalan roundabout.

3. All interests in 571 square metres of grassland, wooded scrubland and paved area to the south east of A28 Chart Road and north east of A28 Matalan roundabout.

3A. The right of access over 859 square metres of paved area to construct, inspect and maintain a retaining wall to the south west of former public highway known as Beaver Lane.

4. All interests in 78 square metres of grassland, wooded scrubland and paved area to the south east of Chart Road on former public highway known as Beaver Lane.

4A The right of access over 218 square metres of paved area and wooded scrubland to construct, inspect and maintain a retaining wall to south east of A28 Chart Road on former public highway known as Beaver Lane.

5 All interests in 2629 square metres of grassland, wooded scrubland, paved area and hardstanding to the south east of A28 Chart Road and south of London to Dover railway line.

5A The right of access over 732 square metres of paved area and hardstanding to construct, inspect and maintain a road bridge and a retaining wall to the south east of Chart Road and north east of public highway known as Beaver Lane.

5B The right of access over 223 square metres of paved area and wooded scrubland to construct, inspect and maintain a retaining wall to south east of A28 Chart Road on previous public highway known as Beaver Lane.

6 All interests in 179 square metres of grassed and wooded area within north side of operational corridor of London to Dover railway line.

6A All interests in 56 square metres of grassed and wooded area within south side of operational corridor of London to Dover railway line.

6B The right over 516 square metres of operational corridor of the London to Dover railway line for a road bridge to carry the road over the railway line including the right to construct, keep, inspect and maintain the bridge.

9 All interests, with the exception of Secretary of State for Transport and HS1 Limited's interest, in 1128 square metres of grassland and scrubland to the south east of A28 Chart Road and south of A28 Tank roundabout.

12 All interests in 438 square metres of grassland and wooded scrubland containing underground surface water infrastructure to the south of Sir Henry Brackenbury Road and west of A28 Tank roundabout.

13 All interests in 128 square metres of paved vehicle hardstanding to the south east of A28 Chart Road, north east of London to Dover railway and south west of Brunswick Road.

DATED this 11th day of May 2017

General Counsel
Kent County Council
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Box Logistics Ltd of Westmount, Comp Lane, Offham Kent ME19 5PP is applying for a new operating license as follows; To Keep 6 vehicles and 2 trailers at the operating centre Unit Z Paddock Wood Distribution Centre, Paddock Wood Kent TN12 6UU.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

CTA Civil Engineering Ltd of Sunflower Cottage, Maidstone Road, Sutton Valence, Maidstone, Kent ME17 3LS is applying to change an existing licence as follows:

To keep an extra 9 goods vehicles and 0 trailers at the operating centre at Frininghan Farm, A249 Detling Hill, Detling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3JD.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

PLANNING

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Slicker Recycling Ltd of Barracks Road, Sandy Lane Industrial Estate, Stourport DY13 9RW is applying for a licence to use Husk Commercial Vehicle services, The Freight Terminal, Lyden Hill, Dover CT15 7JN as an operating centre for 1 goods vehicle and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

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Promotion sparks ambition for Fleet

Club looking to break into the Football League in five years

TRIUMPH: Ebbsfleet celebrate their play-off win

Pictures: DAVID PURDAY

Football

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

EBBSFLEET United are ready to compete with some of England's biggest names after securing promotion to the top-tier of non-league football, according to the club's general manager.

The Fleet finally clinched National League status last weekend with a 2-1 win over Chelmsford City to banish the demons of 12 months ago when they were cruelly beaten on penalties in the play-offs against local rivals Maidstone United.

It means the club will now be just one step away from the glitz and glamour of the Football League next season, and will come up against household names like Leyton Orient, Tranmere Rovers and Wrexham.

And with substantial investment and development in the surrounding area with the Ebbsfleet Garden City and proposed London Paramount resort, club bosses say promotion has come just in time to expand its growing supporter base.

"Hopefully we've taken the first step," general manager Dave Archer told KoS.

"It's a little bit overdue but we got there in the end and we look forward to welcoming some big names next season.

"I always drive past the garden city and there's something new there every day.

"With 15,000 new homes and such good travel links it gives us an opportunity to encourage more people to come and watch Ebbsfleet."

Backed by Kuwaiti businessman Dr Abdulla Al-Humaidi - who also has his hand in the London Paramount project on the Swanscombe Peninsula - the club is giving the main stand at its Stonebridge Road home a £5m facelift.

Mr Archer said he wanted to see the club break into the Football League within "five or six years" but was not setting specific targets for the coming campaign.

"You hear so many bad stories about club owners but he has been wonderful and he's helping us generate revenue 365 days a year," he said.

"If you are attracting young professionals you want a nice stadium and for them to feel comfortable."

Minibikes ready to return to Lydd Kart Circuit

Motorsport

LYDD Kart Circuit is set to host a round of the British Minibike series next weekend.

The 1,040-metre track, first established in 1993, will welcome riders for the fourth round of the 2017 championship, considered something of a gateway to other forms of motorsport.

"What we wanted to do was to make motorcycle racing as accessible as possible," promotions and marketing manager Matt Pierce told KoS this week.

"We've got to make sure we support the progression of junior riders and the way we do that is to make it as cheap and easy for them as we can."

RACING: BSB Photos

A sport that's growing in popularity, minibikes are both an alternative and a stepping stone to the likes of the British Superbike Championship, whose star riders regularly appear at track venues.

"To get a competitive bike costs thousands, but here you cut those costs in half, and when you're not worrying about the expense as much, it makes it more fun," said Pierce.

"People will have ridden on the road and this gives them the opportunity to do a bit of racing."

Attracting a host of riders from teenagers to some as old as 60, the championship rolls into the Kent coast next weekend, with the track regarded by bosses as one of the most exciting in the country.

"It's fantastic - it's a proper weekend away and one everyone really looks forward to," Pierce added.

Sport Shorts

» Email **sports@kosmedia.co.uk** or call **Tom Pyman** on **01233653481**

Taylor returns but Gills keep Pennock at helm

GILLINGHAM have confirmed Ady Pennock will continue as the club's head coach for next season.

The former defender was appointed as Justin Edinburgh's successor in January but has endured a tough time in the Priestfield dugout.

Despite early promises of a play-off push, the Gills conceded late goals in a number of key games and soon found themselves in a relegation scrap - only securing League One status on the final day with a 0-0 draw away at Northampton Town.

When speaking to KoS last month, Pennock said he'd "love to stay" at the club and now it appears chairman Paul Scally has put his faith in his manager for at least the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, the club also announced the return of former boss Peter Taylor in a director of football role, meaning he will oversee "recruitment and all footballing policy".

Further announcements would be made in due course, club bosses added.

BOSS: Ady Pennock

FUTURE: Artists' impression of the South Stand

Work underway on 3G pitch at Hayes Lane

A MAJOR redevelopment of Bromley FC's home ground is gathering pace after work this week began on the installation of a new state-of-the-art 3G pitch.

Works started with the removal of the top soil along with the removal of the perimeter spectator panels and posts.

It makes up part of a huge project for Hayes Lane which will ultimately see 1,450 seats provided in a new South Stand as well as a large indoor community hub.

Construction begins next year with planning permission already secured.

Neil Smith's side enjoyed a successful campaign in their second year since securing promotion to the National League, finishing 10th in the table.

Coyle appointed Welling boss

WELLING United have appointed former player Jamie Coyle as the club's fourth manager in the space of a year.

The 33-year-old former Maidstone United defender replaces Alex Dyer in the dugout at Park View Road, after the Wings secured their status in the National League South last month and reached the final of the Kent Senior Cup, where they were beaten by Dover Athletic.

Coyle made a total of 35 appearances for the club as a centre back during the 2010/11 season, and scored one goal during his time with the Wings, which came in the final game of the season.

He has also featured for Gravesend & Northfleet, Dulwich Hamlet and Dartford before enjoying success in recent years under Jay Saunders with Maidstone at the Gallagher Stadium.

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